Chapter Six
Conclusion

The political systems in Jordan and Morocco have similar characteristics with monarchs at the centre of power. Their political systems encompass some of the modern features of democratic government as enshrined in their respective constitutions. The constitutions provide executive, legislative and judiciary institutions that also guarantee independent functions of the judiciary from the executive branch. Freedom of associations, press and individual liberties are also enshrined in the constitutions. In recent years, human rights have been recognised and measures have been taken to improve the status of women in social, economic and political spheres. At the level of local governments, municipal council bodies are widely contested with involvement from national political parties to shore up their electoral base in the parliaments and national governments.

In essence, Jordan and Morocco are constitutional monarchies. As compared to other Arab monarchies in the region, the two countries have relatively liberal political systems. However, their unique systems that stand out in comparison to Western constitutional monarchies is the way the monarchs presiding over their governments. As opposed to nominal powers of the Western monarchs, the Jordanian and Moroccan Kings are the real executives. They have overarching influence and arbitrary powers in the Kingdoms.

Having claims to be the descendants of Prophet Mohammad and the contributions of the royal families to the founding of the states, both the Kings have combined traditional and modern aspects of legitimacy. To ensure and perpetuate their legitimacy, they have manifested influence mainly over the powerful tribal sections of their societies and command over the military forces and intelligence departments. These influential elites in turn remain the support pillar of the royal families. Moreover, the royal family members are actively involved in the top echelon of the government structures, especially in the
military services. In Morocco, the royal powers are also reinforced through the exclusive patronage over the Foreign, Defence, Interior, and Justice and Islamic Affairs apart from the Prime Minister's office. Similarly, the Royal Court in Jordan exerts more power than any other cabinet ministries. State-owned industries and banks are indirectly under the control of the Royal Courts. Through financial incentives and largesse, business elites serve the interests of the ruling regimes.

The members of parliaments are elected regularly since 1990s with Jordan's latest elections was held on 9 November 2010 and in Morocco on 7 September 2007. Albeit limited role and repressive measures, multi-party system existed and political parties have been active since independence of the two countries from the imperial powers of Great Britain and France respectively. When presented with opportunities, political parties dominated by leftist and Arab nationalist actively participated in the process and at times challenged the monarchies leading to their repression. Jordan banned political parties and Morocco effectively curtailed political parties' role. As compared to earlier years, since political liberalisation in the 1990s, parties embraced the political space that saw vibrant competitions among various political forces. Significantly, the emergence of moderate Islamist parties altered political landscapes. They recognise the legitimacy of the monarchies and adopt peaceful opposition roles as opposed to violent approach. The Islamic Action Front (IAF) in Jordan and the Justice and Development Party (PJD) in Morocco dominate the political scene as the main oppositions in parliaments. In the face of enormous royal powers and influences, parties play by the rules set by the ruling regimes. Even if parties face limitations on their activities, participation in politics ensures expression of their views and debates on national and international issues.

While competing with other political forces, Islamists also engage with palace to wrest more power for parliaments. Unlike leftists and nationalists, who are more or less co-opted by the ruling regimes, Islamists maintain their distance. For instance, except following the 1989 elections where the Muslim Brotherhood held several cabinet posts, the IAF stayed out of the coalition governments, regardless of its position in the parliament. Likewise, the PJD has not participated in any of the government despite its
activism in parliament. The Islamists representations in the parliaments of both the countries are substantially high, even at times polling as the leading parties in the elections. Given their soaring popularity, the ruling regimes often resort to gerrymandering and affecting changes to electoral laws to thwart the electoral success of the Islamists and their representation in parliaments. In some occasions, the regimes strike deals with the Islamists to limit their size of contesting seats in parliaments in return for assuring fair elections. In the case of Jordan, the IAF has been consistently calling for change to electoral laws since the government amended the law in 1993 that favoured pro-government parties after the landslide victory of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1989 elections. In protest against the existing electoral law, the IAF boycotted parliamentary elections in 2007 and in 2010.

The opposition led by the Islamist parties in Jordan and Morocco demand that the Prime Minister should be elected by the parliament rather than being appointed by the King, which is the present norm in both countries. To counter the opposition parties, the Kings have prodded pro-royal political parties or encourage and support parties under the royal patronage. Close friends and aides of the Monarchs also float parties to garner sufficient support from the palace in the parliament. Apart from political parties, the Kings also have leverage against oppositions through the upper house of the parliament. The members in the upper house are mostly handpicked by the King or elected from among the regime supporters most of whom are business elites and prominent tribal leaders. The Kings choose the Prime Minister from among the officials in the Royal Court. After the 1997 elections, Morocco moved away from this tradition when King Hassan II appointed the leftist opposition leader to the Prime Minister post. That being the exception, Moroccan Prime Ministers are appointed from the parties co-opted by the palace.

Both Jordan and Morocco have wide spectrum of active civil society organisations with varied interests. Apart from guaranteeing welfare provisions for their members, the organisations participate in the debates of economic and political issues. In the years following suspension of political parties from 1957 to 1989 in Jordan, the professional organisations filled the political void. Professional organisations function democratically
with elected executives and general assembly ensures space for internal discussion and debates on issues affecting their interests in particular and important issues of national and international in general. Their financial resources are tapped from the mandatory membership fees that relatively ensure financial independence from the government. Often their resilient and persistent voice against some government decisions prompts the authorities to device measures to contain their activities through legislations.

If professional organisations are the most influential organised sector in Jordan, the human rights organisations play equally influential political role in Morocco. The human rights abuses in Morocco brought together country’s lawyers and intellectuals in the 1970s to organise themselves into human rights advocates at the national and international levels. Within the domestic sphere, they call for redress of human rights violations, disseminated reports of abuses abroad among the Moroccan immigrants in Europe. They mobilised movements in European capitals to highlight human rights situation in Morocco to build support base for their cause. They also worked closely with Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and similar organisations to mount pressure upon the ruling regime. Their advocacy effectively resulted in Morocco’s acknowledgement of human rights abuses and measures initiated to protect the same in the Kingdom.

Perhaps the more popular and vocal groups are the moderate Islamist movements in Jordan and Morocco. In the aftermath of political liberalisation the early 1990s, the Islamists permeated into various civil society organisations. In the internal elections of the organisations, often they are able to sweep the majority of the votes and dominate the executive branches. Their biggest winning assets rest on the welfare programmes that they have established across their respective countries. In Jordan, the Muslim Brotherhood runs schools, which competes with state established schools and elite private schools at lower fees. The MB also established a premium hospital and indirectly helped to establish Islamic bank to highlight that Islamic values have the practical competence to encompass all aspects of social, economic and political realms without resorting to Western influence. The Moroccan Islamist movements pursue similar activities in
providing charity services, especially in the poor urban areas and in the rural region. They reach out into places where the state services are minimum or least visible by compensating the gap and in return benefiting from their social services.

In response, the ruling regimes sponsor the Non-Governmental Organisations to counter the popular charity services of the Islamist movements. Other counter measures include government regulatory bodies that mandate compulsory registrations of all the NGOs to monitor their activities and funding, especially foreign funds. Legislations on NGOs are often passed to suit the interests of the government. In addition, among the NGOs, the more prominent organisations in the sphere of education, social and economic developments, child-care and women welfare are run by the royal families. Other civil society actors such as business associations, trade unions, women organisations and students unions play active role in their respective countries although their political contributions are limited. Their roles are limited mainly to the safeguard of their interests and benefits of their members. However, they also serve as indirect outlet for political parties in an effort to influence and affect government decisions and policies. Political parties also try to influence and use these organisations for their electoral base.

While the political reforms in Jordan and Morocco were the outcome of changing regional and international politics, and triggered mainly by the unrest from among the crucial support base of the palace as a result of austerity measures in conformity to prescribed norms of International Monetary Fund, the reforms are controlled and initiated by the ruling regimes. The other prominent actors in the political reforms process are the United States and the European Union in the role of external donors. Although their missions have similar objectives, the US and the EU have different approaches in their efforts to promote democracy in Jordan and Morocco. While the US combines soft approach in the form of financial aid, dialogue and favourable trade incentives with hard approach that entails military intervention, the EU is mainly confined to soft approach with military action as the last resort in the event its security is threatened. In their multilateral cooperation on democracy promotion, unlike the EU, the US tends to pursue unilateral measures in either soft approach or hard-line position as in the case of Iraq. On
the contrary, the EU pursues sustained dialogue in the hopes to bring about reforms without resorting to military actions.

Beyond the rhetoric of democratic values that ensures equality and freedom, the idea of democracy promotion of the external actors stem from their beliefs that democracies promote peace and prosperity that is linked to the security of their interests in the region. The US has long established its contacts in the region with the ruling regimes for its economic interests and the Israel factor in relation to regional politics, whereas for the EU, apart from economic interests, the compelling geopolitics of its proximity to WANA propels it to invest in democracy promotion in the region. Sharing borders closely especially with the Maghreb states has been a constant source of unsettling dilemma for the EU. It perceives that security and peace in the region can be secured only through democratisation of the region in the face of access of immigrants across the border and increasing threats from extremist movements.

The US assists Jordan and Morocco through its various programmes, which mainly includes United States Aid for International Development and Middle East Partnership Initiative. For the EU, among the host of policies, the core programmes include Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument. These programmes are set to cover broad range of issues like democracy and good governance, respect for human rights, economic liberalisation, uplifting status of women, reforms in judicial systems and support for civil society organisations. The programme agreements are directly negotiated at the government levels giving further advantage for the ruling regimes. With the controlling pace of reforms at their disposal, the regimes move according the demands of the situation. Moreover, due to security concerns of the external actors, they are unable to pressure regimes. While the US grants greater aid to Jordan, the EU funding is more in Morocco in comparison to its assistance to Jordan.

With security as the priority concerns, economic co-operations have progressed at the expense of the political reforms. As compared to aid granted for economic reforms, funding for democratic process is less and hesitantly implemented at a slow pace. Democratic funds are not readily available to civil society organisations and NGOs due to
ruling regimes’ restrictions except for technical supports provided by the various civil society counterparts of the external donors. Besides, on the foreign funding issues, most civil societies and NGOs are wary of the US financial aid accused of its dubious democracy and human rights records in reference to the US-led War in Iraq and its close proximity to ruling regimes. The EU faces less resistance in its democracy promotion but its reluctance to deal with Islamist movements draws criticism from civil societies. Although the US does not have official contacts with the Islamic Action Front due to its ties with Hamas, the US has good relations with the Justice and Development Party. As for the EU, its conditional programmes exclude the Islamist parties. The general public attitudes in Jordan and Morocco have biased views on the US efforts at democracy promotion, whereas the programmes of the EU are well received even though policies are determined at the government levels.

**Distinctions between Jordan and Morocco**

Despite greater similarities between Jordan and Morocco, there are few differences. Morocco has more population than that of Jordan. Morocco’s ruling dynasty, the Alawis achieved power and spiritual hegemony by 1666, centuries before the establishment of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 1946. The state of Morocco continued even during the French protectorate. The Moroccan monarchy was not the outcome of any external actors, whereas Jordan monarchy was created by the British colonial power. The Moroccan kings not only claims to be descendants of Prophet Mohammad but also proclaimed as the Commander of the faithful or the preserver of the faith. Jordan monarch does not assert his spiritual leadership. Unlike Jordan, in the aftermath of independence in 1956, no constitution was formulated in Morocco during the reign of Muhammad V.

In reforms process, if Jordan was propelled by the opposition against peace process with Israel and economic hardships, Morocco was challenged by changing international situation in the 1990s after the end of Cold War that was supportive of democracy. External pressure on the monarchy to conform to the new trend mounted, particularly in
1992 after the European Parliament denied Morocco an aid package because of its poor human rights record. Furthermore, the example of neighbouring Algeria, which plunged into a war between security forces and the Islamists provided a sharp reminder of the vulnerability of the Moroccan regime. Domestically, a series of severe droughts had forced many rural residents into the cities, resulting in unprecedented levels of both unemployment and social discontent. In turn, social unrest led to increasing support for Islamist groups, which egged on the monarchy the danger of ignoring social disaffection. The IAF is more vocal when it comes to opposing the issues and government policies. Although PJD may oppose and differ with government policies, it does not openly criticise the government, rather it resorts to subtle approach. Muslim Brotherhood runs large visible charity institutions, including schools and hospital, and the government does not restrict its charity activities. As for Movement for Unity and Renewal in Morocco, it does not operate welfare services at the scale of the MB. The Justice and Charity movement in Morocco faces restrictions to its social services.

In Morocco, human rights movements are active in calling for reforms whereas, Jordanian professional associations are politically more active than their Moroccan counterparts. Regional stability is vital for Jordan given the Israel-Palestinian conflicts and the dependent of the Kingdom on external aid from the West and neighbouring Arab states, and remittances from its citizens working in Gulf States. Jordan’s vulnerability to events in neighbouring countries caused a downturn in the economy and social unrest in the 1980s. The decline of the world oil market during the mid-1980s led to the repatriation of many Jordanians and a decline in aid from the Gulf States. Morocco's problem is mostly confined to Western Sahara issue and its neighbouring Algerian border on the issues of extremists' threat. Although Morocco has trade relations with Gulf counties, the intensity of regional conflicts do not adversely affects Morocco due to its geographical distance as compared to Jordan.

In Jordan, the House of Representatives has 120 members, 9 seats reserved for Christians, 3 are for Circassian and Chechen minorities, and 12 for women. The members of the lower house serve for four-year term. The Senate has 60 members, appointed by the King
for eight years (one-half of the members retiring every four years). As for Morocco, A 325-member House of Representatives is elected by direct public vote for a five-year term of office. The 295 of the members of the House of Representatives are elected in electoral districts and 30 seats are reserved for women on a nationwide constituency basis. In the House of Counsellors, 270 members are elected by indirect vote. The 162 counsellors are elected in each region by an electoral college consisting of the representatives of the district councils (local and regional councils, provincial and prefectural assemblies). The remaining 108 counsellors are elected in each region by electoral colleges made up of elected members of professional chambers (industry, commerce, labour union, agriculture, handicraft, service sector and sea fisheries). The members of the House of Counsellors are elected for nine years with one-third of the House retiring every three years.

Findings of the Study in relation to Hypotheses

1. Although, both Jordan and Morocco have started economic and political liberalisation since 1980s and the presence of active NGOs, civil society, and political parties, democratisation is at the stage of initial process. More reforms are still required, especially in the realm of the palace power, empowering political parties, freedom of association, and more space for media and press.

2. Given the presence of large number of civil societies in both countries, and their active participation in political issues, strong civil society has the potential to play important role in democratic transitions.

3. Since the 1980s, with political liberalisation, despite their co-optation by the regimes, the moderate Islamists have dominated the political scene in both countries, especially in calling for political reforms. Thus, their contribution is significant towards democratic process.

4. Regional impact is felt in both countries. Iranian Revolution in 1979 has had some impact in Jordan and Morocco, with Islamists’ activism in recent decades. For Morocco, it is wary about popular Islamist forces in Algeria. Jordanian political
liberalisation is also dependent on stability, especially in relation to Israel-Palestinian conflicts.